

Save

# COMMUNITY VISION 2002

## Officials see development continuing

### Commercial development accelerating in township

By DAVE MELCHIOR  
Courier Staff

While rapid development has been a fact of life in Ypsilanti Township since the 1990s, township Supervisor Karen Lovejoy Roe said even though it is hard to believe, the pace still is accelerating.

Housing development continues at a very rapid pace, she said, predicting that 2002 would be a record year for residential building and occupancy permits.

"Residential is holding up very well," said Lovejoy Roe. "Developers are providing a variety of market points where people can enter our housing market."

She said even though there has been considerable negative economic news, homebuyers still are in the market because of the low interest rates.

But the big story this year is business development, she said.

"Since I've been around here - 13 years - there's as much commercial development in 2001 and 2002 as there's ever been," said Lovejoy Roe. "It's all over the township."

More businesses are interested in locating in Ypsilanti Township, both in new business areas and in those targeted for redevelopment.

Whittaker Road south of Interstate 94 is the chief example of new business development areas.

New buildings are being built and new businesses are opening in the business parks just south of the interstate, and construction has begun on Paint Creek Crossing, the shopping center that is being anchored by a Kroger supermarket.

Other developments are being planned for the stretch of Whittaker Road south to Textile Road, said Lovejoy Roe.

Those include a new Citizens Bank branch on the southeast corner of Whittaker Road and Huron



**KAREN LOVEJOY ROE**  
SUPERVISOR  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP  
OF YPSILANTI

River Drive and an office complex in the same area.

Lovejoy Roe said township officials do not want to see the commercial development spread too much.

"We're really looking hard to stay away from development of a major commercial corridor," she said about the corridor.

Lovejoy Roe said the business development is a logical result of the booming housing market. The residents of the residential developments south of Interstate 94 represent a huge potential market for the businesses moving into Paint Creek Crossing.

But Whittaker Road is only one of several hot spots for development, said Lovejoy Roe.

She noted that the level of activity along East Michigan Avenue is accelerating.

"Interest seems to be peaking in that area," she said. "Part of the master plan change for area was to make it easier for businesses to reuse property there."

Township officials have for years been working to redevelop the Michigan Avenue-Ecorse Road business districts, and Lovejoy Roe said those efforts seem to be reaping

ing results.

"CVS (the new pharmacy at Michigan and Harris) was the first new development there," said Lovejoy Roe. "That was a catalyst."

Since that store opened last year, Lovejoy Roe said, new automotive related businesses have opened, and Kroger's has announced plans to expand its East Michigan Avenue store into a superstore.

"Once they saw CVS, it spurred others to think this was a good area," said Lovejoy Roe.

She said there also is increasing interest in Washtenaw Avenue west of the city, and Gault Village on Grove Road just south of I-94.

In each of those areas, Lovejoy Roe said, there is major economic activity, and she said she expects the pace to remain strong well into the future.

The widespread nature of the interest is an indication of the overall strength of the township economically, said Lovejoy Roe.

"Things are booming in Ypsilanti Township," she said. "2001 was a good year; 2002 is going to be a great year."

### Planning efforts paying off with major projects in city

By DAVE MELCHIOR  
Courier Staff

As Ypsilanti's top elected official, Mayor Cheryl Farmer has been one of the key people in the efforts to revitalize the city.

And looking ahead, Farmer said a lot of what the community will see happening over the next few years is actually the culmination of efforts that have gone on for years.

Some of what she talked about was directly related to development, but a lot of the effort came in areas that people might not necessarily associate with development, but which is important.

Crime is an example, the mayor said.

"If you make it safe, they will come," said Farmer. "There was a perception that this was not a safe community. We started to go to work real hard on that."

While crime did rise slightly in 2001, the statistics for the previous four years show marked decreases: down 16 percent in 1997; down 22 percent in 1998; down 22 percent in 1999 and down 5 percent in 2000.

Then there are issues like building codes and the general condition of properties.

"It looks like somebody cares about the place," Farmer said. "Those are the kinds of factors that have made people sit up."

Then there are the major projects and initiatives.

Those include the Water Street Redevelopment, which will bring hundreds of condominiums to the area along the Huron River south of Michigan Avenue; the comprehensive repaving program that includes all of the city-maintained streets and is financed by a voter approved bond issue; the replacement of water mains as part of that project; cooperative efforts with Eastern Michigan University, including an effort to revitalize West Cross



**CHERYL FARMER**  
MAYOR  
CITY OF YPSILANTI

Street and the neighborhoods in that corridor.

In recent years, the city has seen the redevelopment of the old high school on Cross Street as senior citizen apartments; the construction of the Michigan Avenue Boulevard; the continuing development of the Riverside Arts Center on Huron Street, including the construction of the West Link project that will provide access from downtown into Riverside Park; the redevelopment of the 10.8-acre site on the city's south side where Exemplar Manufacturing is located, and the continuing development of the Automotive Heritage Collection museum on East Cross Street.

Farmer said the result of all of that is very real.

The city's cumulative state equalized property value has increased 48.9 percent from \$240 million in 1995 to \$358 million in 2001.

And there is another measure of success: The increasing level of interest among businesses that want to get involved in Ypsilanti.

Among those businesses are Walgreen's and the AutoZone, which have built outlets at the corner of Hewitt and Washtenaw and

Biltmore Properties Corp., the developer on the Water Street project.

"As the word got out about the successes, private developers started coming in to take a look," said Farmer.

Looking to the future, the mayor said she sees the pace of development quickening in the city.

The city is in a good location, and she said the key groups in the community - the government, Eastern Michigan University and the business community - all are involved in the efforts.

Added to that is the interest from outside entities. Farmer said perceptions about Ypsilanti are changing, and as they change the level of interest in the community rises.

She said that was a major factor in the interest generated among developers in the Water Street project.

When those developers took a hard look at the city, they realized Ypsilanti offered a wealth of opportunity.

"They said, 'Wow, we think this is the future,'" said Farmer. "Look what we've got to work with here."

## Cooperation is enhancing economic activity

By KEITH R. PETERS  
President Ypsilanti Area  
Chamber of Commerce

When I see the city of Ypsilanti and the charter Township of Ypsilanti working together on a project, I expect to see great results.

As I watch both the city and the township working on the main roads and interchanges that serve our community, I see good things happening. Some of the blight that was along these corridors has already been cleaned up and more is in the process of renewal and reinvestment.

Michigan Avenue from east to west is showing great improvement. From the county line on the east we have seen the township and the road commission partner to improve the road and make it much more usable and attractive. Now the township is encouraging private



**KEITH PETERS**  
PRESIDENT  
YPSILANTI AREA  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE

investment and we have seen positive responses.

Coach's is investing in a significant

expansion.

Loves Automotive has also made an investment.

US 12 Powersports has made a major investment in the old Jack Webb location. Next to that Advance Auto Part is building a new facility and across the street Michael's is putting in a new RV dealership. Kroger is looking at a major expansion and on and on goes the list of investors, not the least of which is the investment that Joe Sesi has made.

In the city of Ypsilanti, we have seen such new interest with companies like Enterprise Rent-a-Car moving in and with the impact of Forest Health Care on the east end of the city bringing life to Michigan Avenue and Ecorse Road.

What can I say about the impact of Water Street that hasn't already been said?

With this reclamation project we will see parkland and trails, new retail and investment, and almost a thousand new residences for our

uptown area.

I use this term "UPTOWN" because I feel that from now on we need to refer to our downtown area as our "UP" town area instead of our "down" town as truly things are looking "up" in Ypsilanti.

This summer will be a time of significant investment in "UP" town Ypsilanti. Those who have already made the investment will see their investment pay off.

I thank the folk from Materials Unlimited, Haabs, Puffer Reds, Country on the Avenue, Terry Bakery and many others who have led the way and I appreciate the investments that are now being made and considered.

To the west of UP town Ypsilanti, we see the investment that Mantis Garden Supplies has made in the community and leading the way in that area.

Back in the township to the west,

we see the beautiful Family Service Learning Center that the UAW, Visteon and Ford are making in our community. What a wonderful addition this will be to Ypsilanti.

Much more is happening, including new housing units and more light industrial and retail space.

The Michigan Avenue/I-94 interchange area is going to have significant development in the next few years as Hewitt Road is extended south and east to provide for new business development in this important area.

The Automotive Heritage Highway designation by the U.S. Park Service, with Ypsilanti being a hub city for this will be critical in our development as a tourist attraction. With our fine museums, restaurants, shops and historic homes being a huge attraction, we will see

(See CHAMBER, Page 6)





# Old businesses growing; new businesses locating on East Michigan Avenue

By JUDY BUSACK  
Courier Staff

Two of the top reasons that business owners give for renovating or building in the East Michigan Avenue corridor are accessibility to other counties and the expressways. "We are willing to work to improve the aesthetics of the corridor and we try to let them know the township wants to be a partner," said Kevin Kwiatkowski, director of Ypsilanti Township's Community and Economic Development Department, about why he believes more business are electing to stay in that area and why new businesses are choosing to buy in the East Michigan Avenue corridor.

The township has targeted East Michigan Avenue for revitalization. Discount-Battery Outlet, Your Complete Battery Source's owner Rob Hohman, who started his business 14 years ago at 1070 E. Michigan, said the area is improving.

"I think that the general climate is improving, just seeing the developments in the last year. There seems to be more interest in locating businesses here. Just looking at the investments, from K. D. Michaels to the redevelopment of the Jack Webb property (by U.S. 12 Auto Sales and U.S. 12 Powersports), people are putting some serious investments into it since I've been here," said Hohman.

One of the reasons Hohman chose East Michigan Avenue for his business is because it has been a high traffic area. He said 14 years ago MDOT figures showed that 38,000 cars a day traveled that stretch of road.

Bill Anderson, General Sales Manager of one of the old-timers on East Michigan Avenue, Sesi Lincoln-Mercury, said the location

is good for business. Sesi has been at 950 E. Michigan Ave. for more than 30 years.

"We have a lot of customers that find their way here pretty easily. Michigan Avenue is a big road. There are more businesses out here and more businesses bring more people," said Anderson.

Michael Kaye, owner of K. D. Michaels which is currently located on Ecorse Road and has been for six years, is building his new store at 1133 E. Michigan, with a planned opening date of April 15. "The potential for growth was a lot better there (Michigan Avenue). It seemed like an area that needed development," he said.

One of the reasons for the move was Kaye needed more space.

The business, which sells recreational vehicles, RVs, travel trailers, fifth wheels, pop ups, also does a lot of service, said Kaye.

"It was an ideal location. It was too expensive to buy on I-94. They have priced out the property there," he said.

"I think more commercial businesses will move into (the area), and I think it will be a good place to be in business. A lot of different type of people travel up and down this road, and if you take care of them, they will come back," said Anderson.

Kwiatkowski said, "We (the township) have relaxed design factors. It is a vital area; (it's) cheaper than Canton or Ann Arbor, and Michigan Avenue is a link between those two."

"There isn't a lot of congestion to get here. The traffic is not unbearable by any means," said Anderson.

Although change is coming to the area, Kwiatkowski said it doesn't happen over night.

"We are positioning ourselves so we are marketing toward this corridor so when the time comes and people want to be there, we are ready," he said.

Kaye said he believes it has always been a good business district. "I think maybe people have missed the potential ..."

Kaye believes that within the next 15 years East Michigan Avenue will be a focal point for the township.

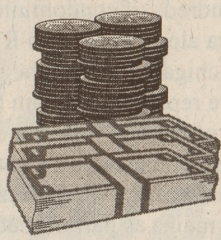
"I like the easy access to the highways," said Tim Fagan owner of Coach's Catastrophe Cleaning & Restoration Services. "We have another 10,000-square-foot building in Fenton; we are really strong believers in the area. Washtenaw, Genesee and Livingston (counties) are growing very quickly."

"The township has been very co-

(See MICHIGAN, Page 7)

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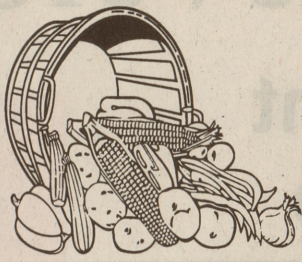
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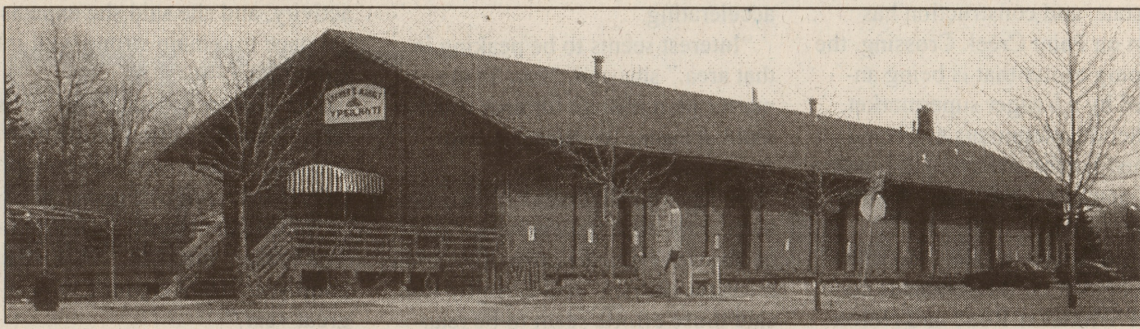


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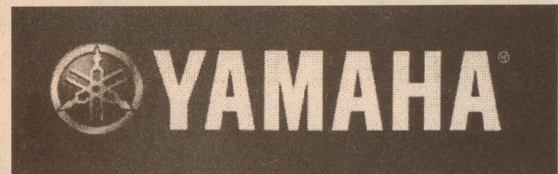
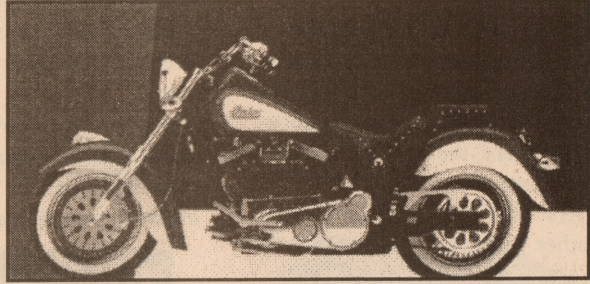
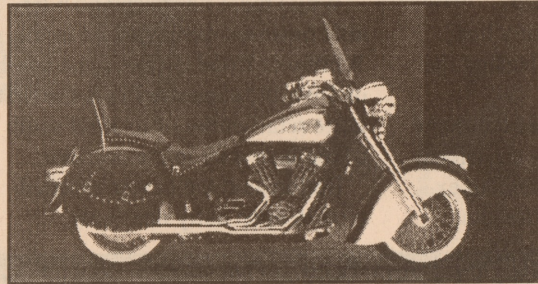
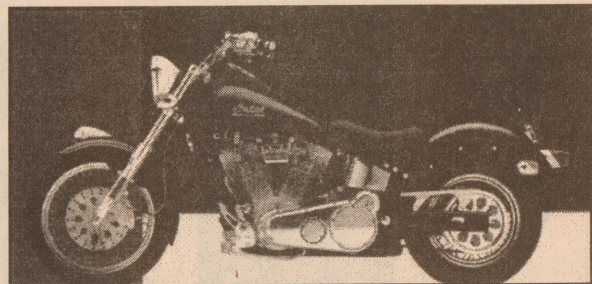
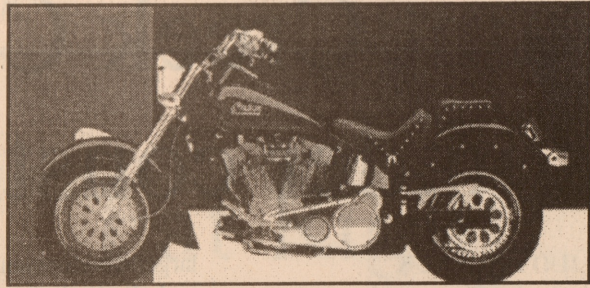
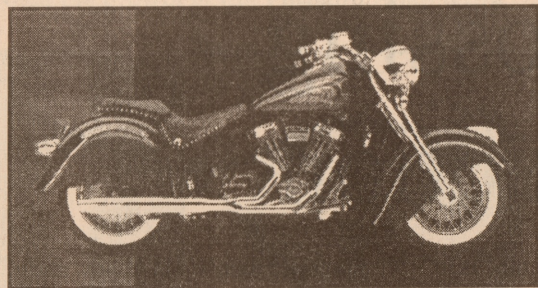
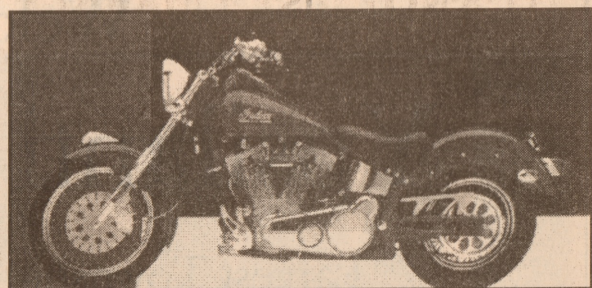
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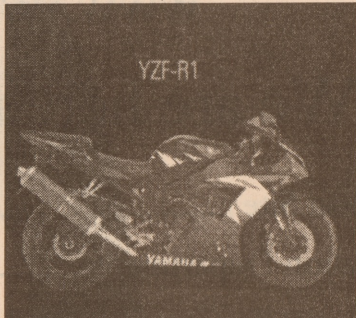
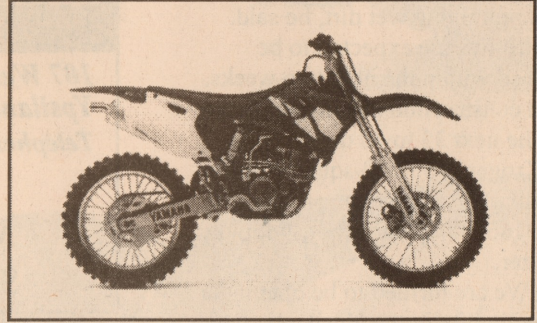
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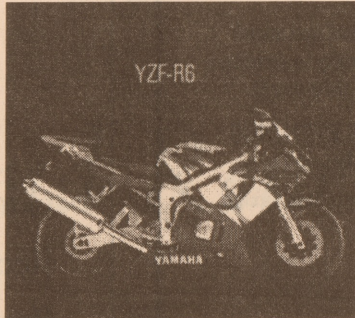


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# Whittaker Road corridor targeted for development

By JOHN BARR Jr.  
Courier Special Writer

The focus of development in Ypsilanti Township has been Whittaker Road south of Interstate 94 in the past year.

Kevin Kwiatkowski, director of community and economic development for the township, said new housing sales and the fast rate of startups in the past few years were responsible for the growth.

"It created a bit of excitement in the development community and then they started giving an opportunity to Ypsilanti Township," he said. "People are finding they can buy more house for the dollar than

they could in surrounding communities."

Also driving the building boom is the fact that there is a large amount of vacant land along Whittaker, which is a major traffic corridor in the township because it is linked by an interchange to Interstate 94, which provides easy access to Ann Arbor to the west and Wayne County to the east, Kwiatkowski said.

"You have the culture of Ypsilanti, and that's why I think many people are finding Ypsilanti Township to be a great place to call home," he said.

The residential growth has helped create the need for new

businesses going up in an industrial park next to I-94, the township library and a new 161,000-square-foot shopping center south of Huron River Drive, Kwiatkowski said.

The shopping center developers are financing improvements to Whittaker Road in front of the development. Construction has begun on the center.

To handle the increased traffic, Whittaker Road will be widened to five lanes in front of the shopping center. New traffic lights will be installed and modifications made to existing lights to improve traffic flow, Kwiatkowski said.

Rawsonville Road, which runs down the east side of the township was improved last year.

Two buildings, one 70,500 square feet, and another 56,000 square feet, are being completed in the Whittaker Road business park.

The new Ypsilanti District Library on Whittaker Road just south of Stony Creek, which opened earlier this year, also has become a major draw.

Library officials have reported that the number of people using the district library has increased dramatically since the new building opened.

As part of the effort to manage the rapid development, the town-

ship is trying to preserve open land through new design standards, Kwiatkowski said.

It has changed land use designations south of the shopping center

to encourage uses such as office space.

"We try to provide a good mixture of those things along the corridor," said Kwiatkowski.



Construction of Paint Creek Crossing is under way on Whittaker Road. Kroger will be the anchor store in the complex.

COURIER PHOTO / MARK MUELLER

## Paint Creek Crossing is under construction

By JUDY BUSACK  
Courier Staff

Although the response to the Paint Creek Shopping Center has been tremendous, said Rodger Barton, owner of the shopping center development, the weather is delaying the construction.

"Although everybody said the weather was great, for construction, it wasn't," said Barton. "It (dirt) never froze." Consequently, this meant moving wet dirt, he said.

Utilities are expected to be placed within the next two weeks, and construction should be started in the next 35 to 40 days.

Kroger, a 55,000-square-foot supermarket, will be the anchor for the 166,000-square-foot shopping center.

"We are thrilled to be opening a new facility in the Ypsilanti community," said Jon Flora, Michigan president for Kroger at the groundbreaking in November. "There is tremendous growth in the area, and we are poised to meet the shopping needs of Ypsi residents."

Leonard Terranova, senior manager of public affairs for the Kroger Co., said store officials decided to open the Whittaker Road store because Ypsilanti Township south of I-94 is growing so rapidly.

Barton's company is not building the Kroger, but is building the rest of the center.

The new supermarket will be the seventh for the company in the Ypsilanti-Ann Arbor area and there are no plans to close any other stores in the area.

A representative from Kroger Co. said the project is on schedule and everything is going well.

Plans for the supermarket include a drive-through pharmacy, Nature's Market organic and natural foods department, a large selection of specialty and international foods, a fresh seafood counter and a floral shop.

Paint Creek Crossing is part of a

larger development that also is to include single-family homes, condominiums and apartments.

Barton said the company has been very pleased with leasing the stores.

Some of the companies that have signed lease agreements are Blockbuster; Curves for Women, an exercise center; Hungry Howie's;

Fantastic Sam's; Hallmark, and Subway.

While there has been considerable business development in the Whittaker Road corridor just south of I-94, the supermarket is the first large retail outlet of its kind south of the interstate in the corridor.

Barton said the center is scheduled to open early next year.

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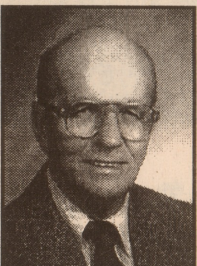

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# City, EMU focus on Cross Street

By JOHN BARR Jr.  
Courier Special Writer

West Cross Street has been the target of revitalization the past couple of years.

Already, the old high school has been converted into senior apartments called Cross Street Village, and a major addition to the fire equipment museum at Huron and Cross streets is nearing completion.

Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University, the Washtenaw County Transportation Planning Group and the Michigan Department of Transportation have been working together on a traffic study of West Cross Street from Huron Street to Summit to determine whether the stretch should be returned to two-way traffic and how best to revitalize the business district, said Jennifer Goulet, Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority director.

She said the traffic pattern, which was studied, could be changed several different ways, including intersection, lane width and engineering changes. The challenge would be getting approval from M-DOT and funding for such work.

"The big goal of the Cross Street corridor study was to look at existing land uses and condition of the business district to really come up with strategies to both strengthen businesses that are there and look for opportunities for redevelopment to really make that a healthy business area that serves not only the campus area but Ypsilanti in general," said Goulet.

Planners want to build off of the success of Depot Town at the east end of the corridor.

The city has draft recommendations from consultants about how to change Cross Street and Washtenaw Avenue to two-way traffic and revitalize retail and residential areas, said Takia Jordan, assistant Ypsilanti city planner.

"It's not going to be something that will be easy or immediate. It will take a lot of negotiation and a

## Fire equipment museum expected to open soon

By JUDY BUSACK  
Courier Staff

Things are moving along for the Michigan Antique Fire Equipment Preservation Group's new museum in the 100 block of West Cross Street, said Marcia McCrary, curator for the group's museum.

The museum is one of the centerpieces of the redevelopment occurring on Cross Street at the west end of Depot Town and is expected to enhance the automotive attractions expected to bring thousands of visitors to the community each year.

"We are waiting for the cement for the floor (to be poured). That will take about a month and a half to be cured, so we don't have an opening date. Everything is coming along fine; a lot of progress has been made," she said.

She doesn't know the status of the apartments, but probably the museum will be ready before the apartments, she said.

Four apartments are being built behind the museum and revenue from those apartments is to be used to subsidize the operation of the museum.

Howard Weaver, founder and owner of the museum, purchased the firehouse from its previous owner, who maintained an auto museum in it. His plan was to convert it to a fire equipment museum and expand it.

In order to make way for the addition, Weaver purchased the house that was on the corner of Huron and Cross streets and received the Historic District Commission's approval to demolish it.

"We have more equipment. My husband and I own a truck, Howard has more trucks, and we have been in the process of borrowing vehicles. We are working on deals that might bring us trucks. What we hope to do is have a rotating collec-



The Michigan Antique Fire Equipment Museum addition is projected to open by June.

COURIER PHOTO / MARK MUELLER

tion, moving trucks in and out and keeping things fresh, the displays interesting," she said.

McCrary said the elevator is working, and she is looking forward to having access to the second floor. In the old building that may only be the kitchen area, but in the

new building there will be a mezzanine for displays.

Although construction is moving along as well as can be expected, there is no firm opening date yet.

"Howard is talking that certainly by June something is going to happen. Phoenix (Phoenix Construction Co. of Ypsilanti is building the

addition) said something about April," said McCrary, who believes probably the latter date would be correct.

There will be a charge to visit the museum: \$3 for adults and \$1.50 for children.

"We are also working on a membership program where people

could join and have unlimited admission," she said.

Once the addition is finished, the museum is scheduled to be open longer hours.

Currently it is open from 2 to 5 p.m. on the first and second Sunday of each month.

(See CROSS, Page 10)



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# Economic development officials overseeing numerous initiatives

By DAVE MELCHIOR  
Courier Staff

Community development has become an ever more important part of municipal government, and that is as true in Ypsilanti as it is anywhere else.

Megan Gibb, director of community and economic development for the city, and Jennifer Goulet, director of the Downtown Development Authority, are the two officials who deal with the issues every day.

And they hold at least one belief in common: Ypsilanti is on the radar of a whole host of individuals, businesses and organizations looking for places to invest and do business.

Gibb said state economic development officials refer to Ypsilanti as "the comeback city."

"We like that," she added. While the Water Street Redevelopment project is the most ambitious and most publicized of the projects, Gibb and Goulet said there are numerous initiatives moving forward that will bring major new activity to downtown.

The plan to build hundreds of condominiums on the Huron River adjacent to downtown is generating tremendous interest in the community, said Goulet.

The Ypsilanti Planning Commission has recommended approval of the plan for the project to the Ypsilanti City Council, which is expected to take up the proposal next month.

Both Gibb and Goulet said they expect the interest in the community to accelerate again once construction actually begins. That could come as early as late next year.

And they both said what is so encouraging about that is the fact that Water Street is only one of several initiatives in the city.

- Among the others are:
- The construction of the fire museum on Cross Street.
  - The continued development of the Automotive Heritage Collection.
  - The Eastern Michigan University and city collaborative effort to improve the West Cross Street business area and the adjacent neighborhoods. The initial plan for that effort is to be unveiled next month.
  - The collaborative effort with Ann Arbor to establish SmartZones

## Chamber

(Continued from Page 1)

increased interest in our community with many visitors coming to visit and enjoy our community.

Just as important to our community are the Huron River Drive/Whittaker Road entrances to our community.

With the south end growth is being witnessed daily. The new community library, the new shopping areas, new banks being built, new housing with lots more on the drawing board and much more would indicate to use a bright future for Ypsilanti and even Augusta Townships. This area will be laced with bike paths and parklands with ample opportunity for the residents to enjoy the better things of life.

# Destination businesses flourishing in downtown

By JUDY BUSACK  
Courier Staff

Country on the Avenue, located at 105 W. Michigan has been open for a little over a year, and the owners couldn't be happier with their choice of location.

Country on the Avenue joins a number of other downtown businesses such as Puffer Red's and Haab's Restaurant that are downtown destination points.

It's the kind of retail establishment that downtown promoters believe will play a key role in the rebirth of the business district.

"We are the kind of business (that was) located in the downtown 50 years ago, because downtowns used to have a lot more pedestrian access and people were walking around doing window shopping. We would be the perfect store," said Marshia Cordray, co-owner with Patricia Potter.

The store specializes in handcrafted Appalachian furniture, heirloom-quality reproduction and original furniture, home accents, pottery, candles and baskets.

In honor of their year in business Cordray said, they are showcasing a new furniture line "to embody the spirit and strength of the Michigan Northwoods."

"We also upscaled some things; we have a new lamp line, a mid-level in price and in looks. It is

more of a contemporary than a country look, but it does complement traditional country or traditional pieces," said Cordray.

The partners have put every penny they have earned back into the business.

They believe that is one of the keys to their success. They make sure to bring new merchandise and new lines into the store.

They have expanded their silks and home decorating line.

The Fioriware Pottery that the store carries has become a collectible.

"The pieces are expensive, but people have started to discover them. People are buying one item (to add to the collection)," said Cordray.

Country on the Avenue also has two new lines of rugs that have been added to the inventory.

"Both are handmade, one is an inexpensive line of braided rugs, made out of jute in traditional colors. A 2x3 rug is \$10, a 5x8 \$55, they are very expensive and wear like iron. Then we have a very expensive rug, and they can be up to \$600 apiece, but they are all hand-done in natural coloring. They really look like an artist piece when they finish with them," said Cordray.

They also have added a new quilt style to their store's collection of quilts made by women in Ken-

tucky. "It has been risky and incredibly hard work. Patricia and I are stubborn; when you invest time, you become committed. The community has been good to work with, and we get good advice from Depot Town (merchants)," said Cordray.

Cordray said the two partners believe the Water Street project will be a blessing for them when it is completed.

The biggest problem they have is signage to let people know where they are. Cordray said many people don't know there is parking in the rear of the building.

"People will come in and say, 'I finally found a parking place in front.' Somehow we have not been able to get out to the public that there is a parking lot in back. They don't know we are here, and they can enter from the back."

Part of the problem is another building on Huron blocks the back of Country on the Avenue, so people don't see the building.

The perfect solution, the women believe, is a sign facing Huron to allow traffic heading north on that street to see there are businesses open in that area.

"DDA (Downtown Development Authority) is cognizant that there is no sign," said Cordray. "They will help us underwrite the sign, but they can't do it right now. You need to make people feel welcome and that there is a parking lot, that is the only big obstacle."

city and city collaborative effort to improve the West Cross Street business area and the adjacent neighborhoods. The initial plan for that effort is to be unveiled next month.

- The collaborative effort with Ann Arbor to establish SmartZones

in the downtowns of the two communities. Through the SmartZone project downtown Ypsilanti will be wired high tech activities.

- The effort to bring a stop on the proposed Detroit to Lansing rail line to Depot Town.
- Returning two-way traffic to

Pearl and Adam streets downtown.

- The restoration of the downtown branch of the Ypsilanti District Library.
- "We do kind of see a snowball effect," said Gibb. "It just takes time for these public improvement projects."

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Rob Hohman, owner of Complete Battery Source, sees the growth of East Michigan Avenue continuing.

COURIER PHOTO / MARK MUELLER

# Michigan

(Continued from Page 2)

operative. Ypsilanti Township's Kevin Kwiatkowski calls regularly and makes sure that everything is OK and do they need to get anything done. The township seems to be willing to promote growth," Fagan said.

Ron Bogdanski the manager of Furniture Mart at 1085 E. Michigan opened that business with his wife Carol Bogdanski in 1992.

"The property is much cheaper than Ann Arbor. This building in Ann Arbor would be \$3 million. We carry the right furniture for this area," said Bogdanski, adding that the couple have never thought of moving.

"There really hasn't been very much turn over on this end of town that I have noticed. Everybody else has been pretty much the same. They (the township) have seemed to clean up a lot of the area here.

They are trying hard. I see it getting better and better," Bogdanski said.

Kaye said that since his business has started building on East Michigan Avenue, he has seen three new developments.

"It is an ideal spot," he said. "It is a great place to live and work. Every town has its problems; this township is focusing on having a great community."

Hohman said he believes the line

between Washtenaw and Wayne counties will begin blurring as time passes and businesses continue to grow.

"I would say there will be a tremendous changeover of property owners and improvements; some areas will need fine tuning. I think it will fill in from Harris to the city line. In the next 10 years the community, and the township can be proud," said Kwiatkowski.

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# The economics of Ypsi look good

Economics, whether at the national, the state or the local level, is a difficult topic to write about.

There are so many variables and intangibles that go into analyzing an economy.

This year the tea leaves are in some ways more difficult to read and in some ways easier to read.

I say that because the national outlook is so cloudy this year.

In recent weeks, we have learned that what was a recession might not have been one after all, and even if it was a recession, it is supposed to be over.

I'm not sure I buy either one of those premises. Certainly, the stock market has been acting like there was a recession, and in recent weeks, it has been acting like maybe that recession is over.

But the stock market verdict is not clear yet either. There's been a short-term run-up of prices, but no indication of long-term stability.

Then there's the "real economy." Hundreds of thousands of jobs have disappeared, and there most assuredly has been a recession in terms of corporate profitability, and it remains unclear even now whether the upturn in economic activity being reported will translate into improved profit pictures in the near future.

The strongest engine of the economy still seems to be consumers. Consumers are still spending.

But even that has a worrisome aspect. They're doing it with credit, and at some point, we have to assume those consumers will take a step back and regroup.

Then there are things like the Middle East, which seems to be becoming more unstable with each passing day and what that might do to oil prices, supplies and the stability of the world economy.

Against that background, we take a look at what is happening in our community, and there's no doubt the pace is a little slower than it was, but for the first time since I've been in Ypsilanti — 12 years — our community is faring much better than most other places.

Our economy is continuing to expand.

If you don't believe it, get in your car and drive around the area.

There is construction going on everywhere. New businesses continue to open throughout the community.

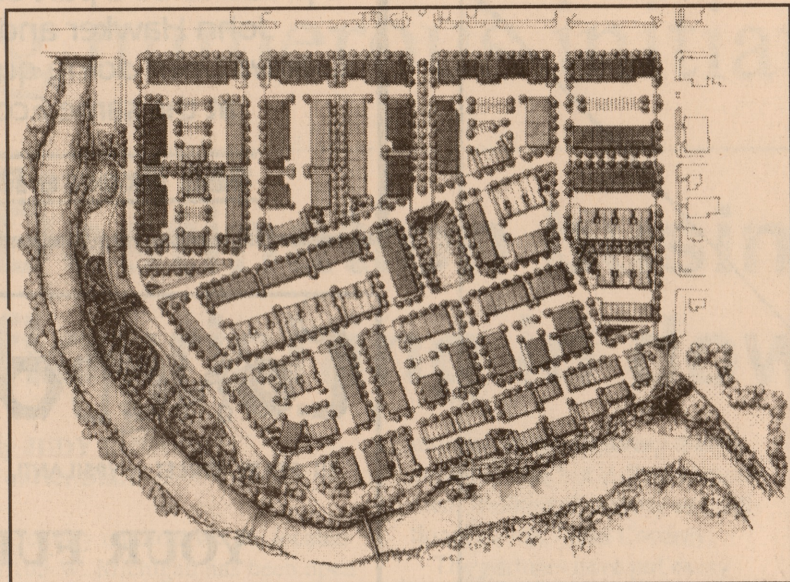
We are hearing stories like Discount Battery, which has been on East Michigan Avenue for years. The owner of that business reports that his Ypsilanti store has done so well it has allowed him to expand to another community. Not so long ago, it seemed Ypsilanti was the last place people opened new businesses, not the first.

Major commercial developments — most notably Paint Creek Crossing anchored by a new Kroger store — are on the drawing board or under construction.

Roads are being repaired and improved; water systems are being replaced.

The biggest redevelopment project in the city's history — the Water Street project — continues to advance.

Both the city and the township governments have taken leading roles in the efforts to bring new



An architect's drawing of the Water Street Project.

Dave Melchior  
Publisher



enterprises to the community and to improve the economic environment in general.

Eastern Michigan University and the community have renewed a relationship that for too long was neglected.

All of this is evidence of a fundamental shift in the economic reality of the community.

When I came here 12 years ago, Ypsilanti was one of those communities known for feeling the impact of economic slumps early and enduring them longer than other communities.

In this latest national slowdown, Ypsilanti was impacted later and less severely than the economy in general and than most other communities.

That is a clear sign of an economic hot spot. We're no longer buried near the bottom of the list of places where people and businesses want to be.

We're at the top, and that makes all the difference in the world.

There has always been a cadre of people who have preached the future of Ypsilanti, often in the face of overwhelming skepticism.

That cadre continues to preach the faith, but to a far less skeptical and much larger audience.

This is a major shift in reality for

our community.

When times are good enough, it is easy for everyone to prosper.

A much more important measure of economic strength is how well an area does when the economy is not so good.

The greater Ypsilanti area is demonstrating a newfound economic strength that has resulted from a couple of related factors.

First of all is simply the community's location. We're on the western edge of the Wayne County metropolitan area. Canton Township is virtually built out, and that is driving expansion here.

And perhaps even more important is the fact that we are a smaller, more affordable neighbor of Ann Arbor.

We offer all the amenities at a much lower cost than our larger neighbor to the west, and more people are discovering that fact every day.

Coupled with that is the attitude of this community. People here are working hard to develop and redevelop the community.

Both the public and private sectors are doing the work and taking the risks they need to take to promote the community and enhance the assets that attract new enterprises and people to a community.

It's a point often referred to as critical mass. If we have reached critical mass, then we have generated enough economic activity that it sustains itself and generates new activity in the form of additional investment from businesses that see the success of those who came before.

I'm not sure we're there yet, but I do think we are so close that we will be there very, very soon.

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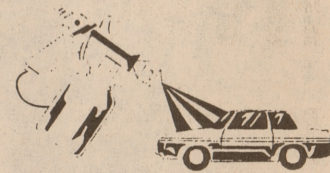
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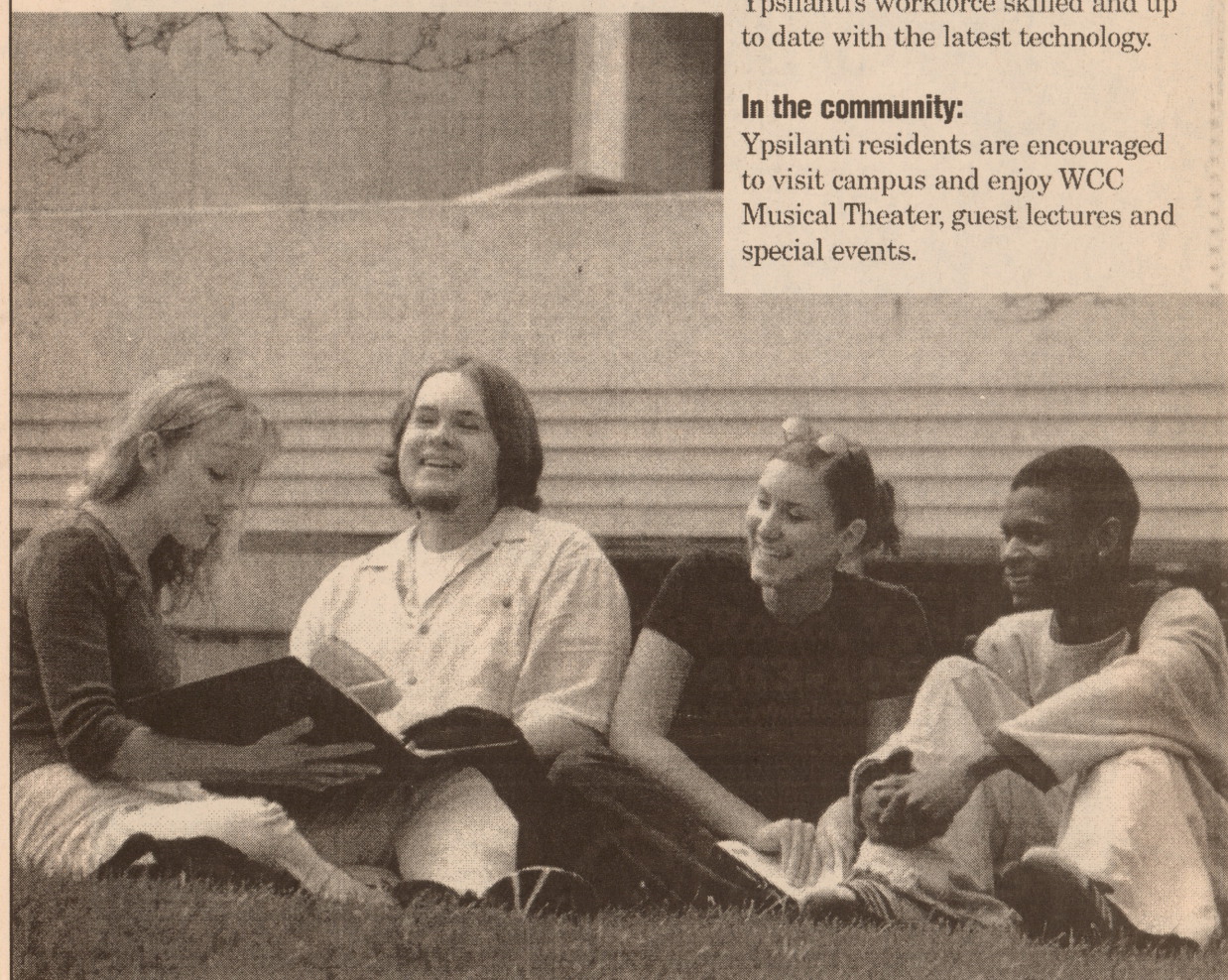
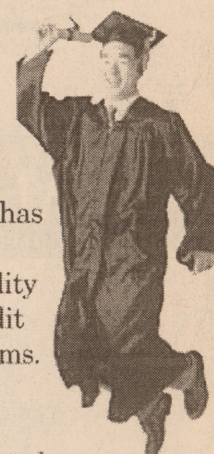
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# Financial institutions see community strength

## Banks making major investments in Ypsi

By DAVE MELCHIOR  
Courier Staff

What banks do is seen by many as a barometer of the health of the communities around them.

In Ypsilanti banks are playing a very visible role in the rebirth of the community.

Two of them, Citizens Bank and the Ypsilanti Office of the Bank of Ann Arbor, are demonstrating their confidence in the economic future of the community with major investments here.

Citizens Bank, which has been a fixture in the community for years, is investing more than \$1 million to replace its branch at the corner of Whittaker Road and Huron River Drive.

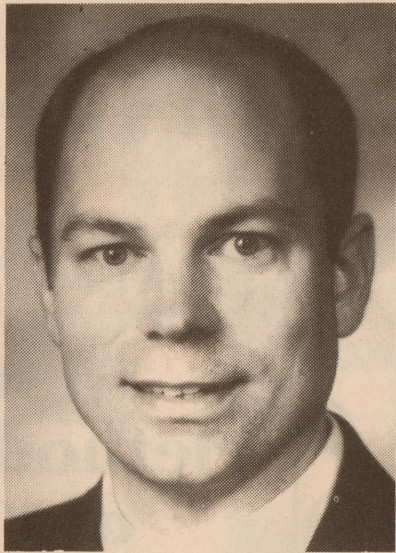
The Ypsilanti Office of the Bank of Ann Arbor is celebrating its first anniversary in Ypsilanti next month. The Bank of Ann Arbor opened its first branch outside Ann Arbor at 7 W. Michigan Ave. in downtown Ypsilanti last April.

The chief executives of the two banks, Citizens Bank's William Beardsley and the Ypsilanti Office of the Bank of Ann Arbor's Barbara Furman both said the reasons for their banks' interest is simple: Ypsilanti is a growing market with strong demographics.

"We're way ahead of projections," said Furman, Ypsilanti District President, about her bank's performance in its first year in the community. "We're really glad to be here. It's been good economically for the bank."

Beardsley, marketing executive for Citizens Bank, said Ypsilanti has been a strong market for Citizens Bank, and he sees the area served by the Whittaker Road office as extremely promising.

"Everything is catching up to



WILLIAM BEARDSLEY

housing," he said. "Everything else is going to follow. We really can't grow any more until we have a new facility."

The bank expects to break ground on the new office next month.

"There's an economic up side (in Ypsilanti) that's not maxed out yet," said Beardsley.

Both Beardsley and Furman said they see a number of factors coming together in Ypsilanti that will provide underlying strength to the economy in the coming years.

First is simply the location.

Ypsilanti is between larger, growing communities to both the east and the west, and that will drive development in this area.

Beardsley said he expects the development in Canton Township to continue westward, especially down the Michigan Avenue corridor.

Furman mentions that same thing, and both she and Beardsley also pointed to the aggressive revitalization efforts in both the city and the township as key to contin-

ued expansion.

Furman is in a unique location to consider the largest of those efforts: the Water Street Redevelopment Project. Her bank is at the west end of the Huron River Bridge, and the Water Street project begins at the eastern end of the span.

"I see the community as being at a kind of crossroads," said Furman. "There are so many things that are almost happening. I can see Ypsilanti being a pretty exciting place to live and work."

Furman said Water Street was not a factor in her bank's decision to open an office in Ann Arbor because the proposal was too far in the future at the time Bank of Ann Arbor officials decided to expand into this market.

Beardsley praised both city and township governments for their role in redevelopment, and also noted the attitude of the residents of the community.

He pointed out that the community at large has sent a "strong statement about how serious it is about redevelopment" by supporting such projects as the comprehensive street repair program that began last year. That program had to be approved by voters, who had to approve the millages to pay off the bonds that are financing the program.

For the two banks, being connected to the community is also a crucial element in doing business in Ypsilanti.

Both banks have local people on their boards and both said they work hard to maintain a relationship with Ypsilanti organizations and participate in Ypsilanti's civic life.

"If you want to show up in Ypsilanti and not engage in the community, think twice about your potential," said Beardsley.



Barbara Furman, Ypsilanti District President Ypsilanti Office of the Bank of Ann Arbor, is pleased with the growth of the Ypsilanti community.

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Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum is now a stop on the Automotive National Heritage Area of Southeastern Michigan.

COURIER PHOTO / MARK MUELLER

# Cross

(Continued from Page 5)

lot of time because the cost to do it will be high."

Any changes would have to be made in partnership with M-DOT, she said.

She said the public will be able to hear the final recommendations regarding transportation related changes in a meeting at 6 p.m. Thursday April 18 at EMU's Welch Hall.

Also in the works is for EMU to build a 200-car parking garage next to the business and finance building south of Pease Auditorium, she said.

"I think that's perking up some of the owners on Cross Street," she said.

Another plus was the incorporation of Cross Street into the Depot Town DDA last year, which will provide additional redevelopment tools.

Another goal is to get EMU and the city to work in a partnership to attract developers.

"They (EMU) look at Cross Street as the gateway to the campus, and they are very concerned about the perception visitors get of the university when they come from Cross Street," she said. "You have a captive student market and right now it's untapped."

Merchants are cleaning up the street by planting grass and flowers and getting trash receptacles and improving the community.

The Ypsilanti Fire Equipment Museum is building a 22,000-square-foot addition and is expected to draw thousands of visitors annually once it is completed.

"The city was eager to have that kind of use," said Bill Kinley of Phoenix Construction, which is building the addition. "I think it will bring people into the city of Ypsilanti to see a museum. It is a very beneficial use. I think it's a really positive addition to the Depot Town area. It certainly relates

to the other automotive and transportation-related things around Ypsilanti."

The opening of Cross Street Villages, moderate-income senior apartments, in the old Ypsilanti High School, has been very positive for the corridor, Goulet said. "It's such a beautiful apartment complex and it's fantastic to have all those new senior residents living there adding to the vitality of the area. It adds to customers, too, within walking and driving distance of our main business district."

"We keep an active waiting list," said Bobbi White, property manager for Cross Street Village. "We do several tours a week to attract prospective tenants, but also we like to do that for the public to come back and see the building. We often have people come back

who used to go to the high school – or their children – and they like to see what it used to look like on the inside.

"The inside has been completely rehabbed. A lot of our residents went to this high school, which makes it really lovely."

"It's a very exciting place to be, and they do support each other very, very well here," White said.

Goulet said, "We're certainly very excited about the opportunities that are going to be provided through the Depot Town DDA and the fact that they extended their district boundaries to include the West Cross Street Village business district and see that as an opportunity for the businesses to work together

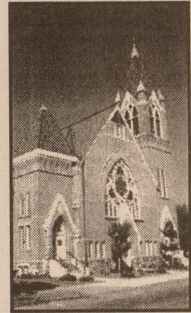
"... To be able to bring the success of Depot Town farther along

Cross Street is going to be a big plus. We're teetering on the edge of some great opportunities there, but there's a lot of work to be done."

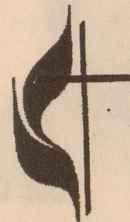
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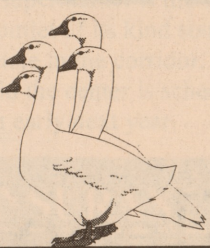


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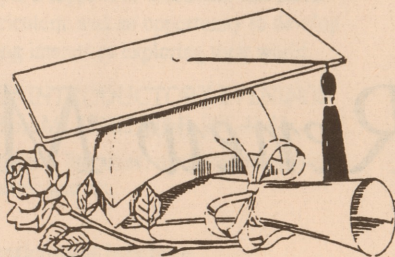
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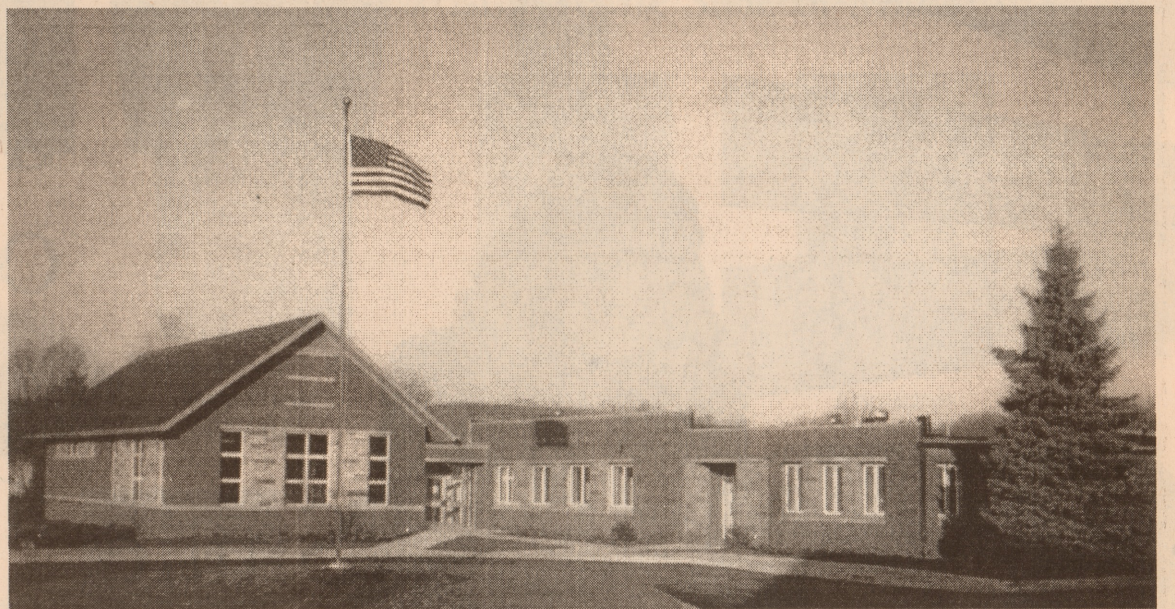
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## Eastern Michigan University implementing president's plan

By JOHN BARR Jr.  
Courier Special Writer

The biggest change at Eastern Michigan University this year is the implementation of the president's strategic plan, including the computer information system, which involved the entire campus and millions of dollars, said Courtney McAnuff, vice president for enrollment services at EMU.

That project involves changing all student systems and records in admissions, student financial aid, records, registration, accounting.

"It's web-based, highly interactive," McAnuff said. "Students will be able to take care of pretty much everything they need to do from online in real time. It will be quite noticeable."

The plan also includes replacing all university computers. The cost of all computer-related changes will be \$30 million. EMU is debating who or where to donate old equipment.

To help retain students and increase graduation, the university has hired 13 new academic advisors for students so each of the colleges has at least one advisor and freshman orientation will be mandatory starting this fall, McAnuff said.

The university created commuter and transfer centers, which will open this week with five fulltime employees to help 3,000 students transfer from another university to EMU every year.

Graduation requirements for general studies also are being looked at to see whether they should be modified, he said. There also are plans to hire new faculty.

Currently, the faculty-student ratio is 1 to 19, "which is outstanding," McAnuff said. "Eastern's undergraduate instruction is phenomenal in that virtually all classes are taught by tenured track or fulltime faculty."

Good news for commuter students will be the addition of 1,000 campus parking spaces by August, and a new 300 vehicle parking structure will be built adjacent to Pease Auditorium by September 2003.

McKenny Union will be

renovated and expanded to double its size, McAnuff said. "It's already outgrown our ability to service the students. We don't have enough space to feed them at lunchtime and enough space for meetings, and so the student union is going to get a pretty big improvement."

EMU has 24,242 students and estimates it will grow by 400 students next fall, he said. Last fall was the largest class of new students ever.

Tuition will increase 8 or 9 percent this fall over last year, or about \$425 per student because the state did not increase funding, McAnuff said.

"The president is looking at ways to increase compensation, but without additional support from the state, we either have to raise it

through tuition or private contributions," McAnuff said.

To help some students deal with higher costs, scholarship programs have been expanded.

"We've also made available \$1 million in new loan opportunities for students, and we've made additional financial aid available," McAnuff said. "For the students with high need we think we're going to be able to meet their needs by making additional dollars available."

"Students really have, we hope, all the opportunities to do well."

The new student housing on Oakwood, which were finished last year, filled up immediately, McAnuff said, and the university will build additional housing in the same area starting this summer.

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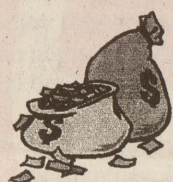
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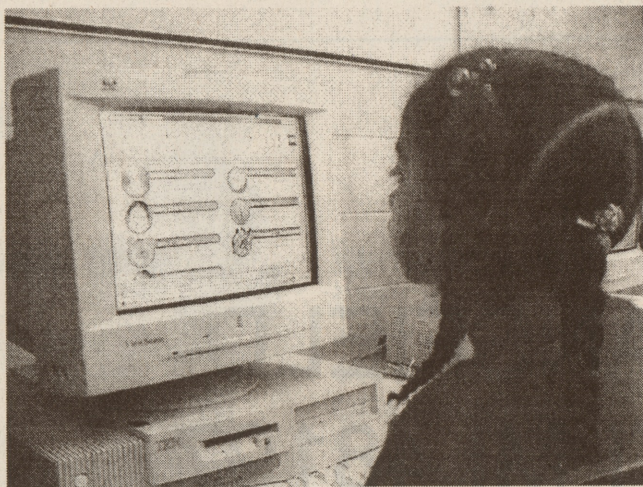
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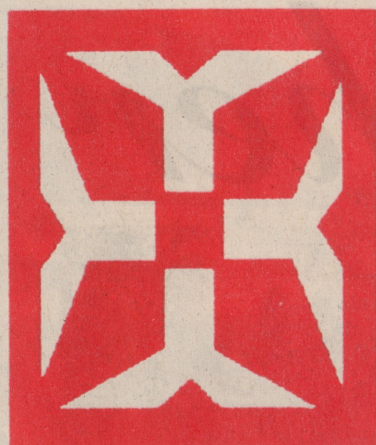
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